LITERARY NEWS, VIEWS AND CRITICISM

NEW BOOKS.

A Way Where Madness Lies.

Do not be an egoist, do not be selfish, do not coddle yourself. If Leonard Calcraft in Mr. W. B. Maxwell's story "In Cotton Wool" (D. Appleton and Company) had minded this advice it is possible that he would not have finished in a madhouse. Leonard was manly; he was large and strong and brave; he had been an officer of distinction in the militia and had stopped runaway horses; he believed that he wanted to go to the war in South Africa, and it hardly seems right, considering these facts alone, to find everybody calling him "Lenny" or "Mr. Lenny," names that do not suggest the masculine virtues. But there were other facts which leave us in no doubt that Lenny was guilty of the "soft life," that he was cocooned in cotton wool.

The story shows him to us at the age of 35 living with his invalid father in a small English seaside town. An irascible man this father, difficult to get along with, given to language not at all suggesting cotton wool. We see him pushed along through the wind in his Bath chair. "He had a passion for robustness of costume, choosing the heaviest and coarsest things, rough peajackets, huge woollen capes, wrapping undyed mufflers about his skinny neck and hiding his white hair beneath vast dreadnought caps. The caps were terrific with their monstrous flaps and peaks, and in truth they added a touch of grotesqueness rather than force to the thin, birdlike nose, the bushy, frowning eyebrows, the drawn lips and the fleshless, pallid cheeks." A very different figure the faithful Lenny. "Young Mr. Calcraft for his part was always so beautifully and appropriately dressed that walking beside the Bath chair throughout the changing seasons of the year he offered a pattern and example for all other young men. His deportment moreover was as worthy of imitation as his admirable clothes, for however slowly he paced, accommodating his stride to the restricted progress of the chair, he carried himself firmly and erectly. Altogether he seemed to humble observers a fine, broad shouldered gentleman, as big as one might be without being too big, sunburned and smooth of cheek, with a natural curl in his well cut brown hair and a reddish glossiness about the small brushed up mustache beneath which white teeth gleamed in a cheerful smile." Everybody admired and liked him; he shone at meetings, in charities and at the club; only his father was capable of assailing him with rude words.

It was in one of the old gentleman's most truculent fits, after the trained nurse had been reduced to tears, that doubt was cast upon the sincerity of Lenny's wish to go to the war. "Didn't want to go, sir," cried the father, driven by the pangs of indigestion to brutal speech. "Want to bully and blackguard me when I call you to order! Sir, you are like some doctored tomcat who hasn't the pluck to go and risk its fur by fighting at night, but because it is given a soft bed to lie on and spiced food to put in its belly gets impudent, yes, takes it all as a right and has the damned impudence to spit at its master and scratch and claw the hand that feeds it." This was monstrous. Lenny did not scratch and claw. He was wonderfully good to his father. It is true, however, that except as the temper of the invalid made him suffer he lived very comfortably. He had all luxuries, including a private bathroom of great elegance, and always plenty of sovereigns in his pockets.

Lenny's life in London after the death of his father is interestingly pictured in the story. We see him at his club and at his comfortable lodgings, where he had a mirror with wings that enabled him to see himself on all sides at once. His timidity about marrying brought suffering to two ladies. The lovely Alma, on finding that she was to be abandoned, reasonably declared: "You have unsexed me almost, forced me to stamp out every natural instinct, broken me to a low slavery, instead of opening my life to wide joys and noble hopes. You have held me on the threshold of marriage, of nature's union, for seven cruel years while all that was best in me was fading, dying, and now you are tired of the plaything you've destroyed." There seemed to be reasons for believing that Helen, the handsome widow, would support the defection of this unstable lover in a calmer spirit, but they were misleading. "While listening to him, apparently with rapt attention, she had drawn away her skirts in order to warm her feet [they were in patent leather shoes and she had put them upon the fender] and had exposed the stockings and ankles. Somehow the slight action, together with the faint rustle of her silk petticoat, caused him to lose the thread of his eloquent discourse." It was soon after this that Lenny ventured upon a somewhat too tender tone and that the widow "coldly and abruptly" requested him to turn on the electric light.

She too could discourse, and presently we find her saying among other things to Lenny: "If ever I marry again—and I don't think I ever shall—I shall choose rationally. I shan't shillyshally or miss the chance of happiness because of any ridiculous conventions. I shan't even wait for leap year; I shall boldly propose to the man if I think I have found him. I shall say: 'I like you, and you seem to like me. I have so much per annum, and I understand you have so much. Now can't we make a couple for whom there ought to be a fair prospect?' And if the man said no I shouldn't bear any malice. And if he said yes and I discovered that I'd make a mistake well, I should only have myself to thank for it." The reader would guess that here was a widow with sufficient self-control, and yet Lenny ran away from her because she was took frankly affectionate and the poor soul drank poison in a Brighton hotel.

Our copy of the story is badly mixed up after page 282. The pages for some time run in a very curious confusion—306, 303, 304, 301, 302, 299, 314, 311—all higgledy piggledy and with many missing links; but from parts of the book that are not inebriated we know that Lenny gradually lost his mind. The story describes vividly his sleepless nights filled with fears of death and annihilation. The daytime was nearly as bad. He thought of Mrs. Fletcher, the amorous widow who had poisoned herself at Brighton. "She was haunting him in the broad daylight as well as in the gray dusk. Suppose that he were to see her ghost. Suppose she stepped forward out of the shadow by the dressing table or liked hiding, waiting in the darkness of the other room. Suppose he heard her footsteps on the stairs, her stiff, cold hands fumbling at the door. If the door slowly opened—if without opening it she came through the door—what could he say to her? Well, he would have to say, 'Helen, be reasonable. This has nothing to do with me. Honestly, I cannot take the blame upon my shoulders. All this was written in the stars thousands of centuries before you and I ever met.' Yes, that was what he would say. No, he would say nothing. And why? Because his tongue would be cleaving to the roof of his mouth, his long front hair would be standing six inches high, his spine would be freezing—he would be paralyzed with fear."

He went to a doctor in the Isle of Wight and was better for a while. But the bad times came back. The brain surely softened. "When he walked a little way on warm afternoons he scrutinized the shop windows, vaguely searching for novel articles that offered comfort or safety. In this manner he bought on different occasions a leather pillow filled with poppies to make him sleep, some sound resisting mats for the landing by his door and a marvellous fire escape which he caused to be affixed to the window of his bedroom. The maidservant behaved very badly in regard to this apparatus. When Lenny wished to see if it worked properly she flatly refused to be dropped down the canvas tube from the first floor to the back yard, and he was so huffed with her that he sent her to Coventry for two whole days." He had dreadful experiences. The story does not spare the realism. It is thoroughly effective.

A Creditable Effort.

It is one thing to write a good short story, it is a wholly different thing to write a sustained novel; that is a discovery that many popular authors have made, or if they have not discovered it themselves, their critics have. The most distinguished example in modern times, perhaps, is Mr. Rudyard Kipling, but there are plenty who are less famous, if well known within their sphere, to bear him company. Mrs. Josephine Daskam Bacon, who has a well deserved reputation as a writer of short stories, particularly of child life, makes her endeavor to enter the other field with "The Inheritance" (Appletons), and not without success. The three strands she has woven do not intertwine as closely as they should, it calls for some good will on the part of the readers to accept some twists in her yarn, and the impressions she leaves are perhaps not those that she intended, but Mrs. Bacon has taken herself very seriously this time, she has put much labor into working up her details, and her readers, though their feelings may be harrowed, will follow the narrative with interest to the end.

The first thread is the tale of a possible lost heir to an English title and estate. Whether the boy is legitimate or not is left in doubt purposely. The reader is kept excited about this through the narrator's recollections of childish impressions, and in these Mrs. Bacon shows all her skill as a delineator of children. They are a little boy's vague recollections, but the reader feels sure that they will lead to something later on. Most marked is the figure of the nurse, the chief person in the story, with her devotion and her reticence. Later, when he is a boy of twenty, the hero returns to England, verifies and explains his memories, steps into the place which he believes is his, with an ease that strains the reader's ability to believe, and comes to a grievous smash. This portion is the weakest part of the story; with all her care the author has left some puzzling threads loose, and these are not gathered together in the final explanation.

The main story, that with which Mrs. Bacon has taken most pains, has to do with American life in a country town, in the dim past, as she regards it. The boy and his nurse are attached, again with a somewhat violent strain, to an American spinster who provides them with a home in a Connecticut town. He grows up with a family of boys, goes to school and college and, after his English experience, settles down to be a country doctor. This calls for a description of the mode of living from the days after the war to the end of the '80s. Mrs. Bacon, luckily, is too young to have any personal knowledge of the period, except possibly a child's impressions of the end of it. She has accumulated a mass of antiquarian knowledge, however, and has reconstructed it as well as she can, a rather dangerous proceeding when there are so many people alive to detect her slips. She takes peculiar delight in describing the changing fashions in woman's array. Here again she introduces a mystery in a strange family from Bermuda, whose chief function is to bring in the little girl that shall later be the hero's bride. The mystery of this family she chooses to leave unsolved. This part of the story would be pleasanter, no doubt, if the hero told things just as they happened, instead of reflecting back in his reminiscences the sadder comments of later experience. The third thread is apparently an afterthought.

She brings in a case of transferred identity through an accident and an electric shock. It is made to fit into the story at the point when it occurs, and gives rise to guesses as to its meaning, which might arise in the medical brain, but, as it turns out, have nothing to do with the story. The sad part throughout is the boy's drifting away from the nurse who has devoted her life to him; that is realism, it may be, but detracts from the sympathy we would like to have for the narrator; for that matter his nature seems critical rather than sympathetic. The British feeling of class distinctions seems ingrained in him, so that it even dulls filial instincts. The reader is interested in him, is sorry for him, but, we fancy, will hardly like him. So much is done for him and he seems to give so little in return. That, possibly, is the author's idea of a strong man.

In spite of the story dealing chiefly with one person, it lacks unity; it is not yet a novel. There is excellent work in it, a vast amount of detail, there are flickers of life here and there, but it does not hang together as a complete whole.

Cambridge Manuals.

Ten more volumes of the excellent popular series of "The Cambridge Manuals of Science and Literature" (Cambridge University Press; G. P. Putnam's Sons) brings the number published so far up to forty-two. Varied in subject as they are these volumes are remarkably uniform in merit, nearly all being businesslike accounts of the matters they treat of, put clearly and interestingly in simple language. Within the limits assigned to them they cannot, naturally, be exhaustive, but they are all fuller than the accounts to be found in the larger encyclopedias and are presented more entertainingly.

Three deal with natural science. In "Spiders" Mr. Cecil Warburton touches only on the general characteristics of the family, illustrating his statements with interesting examples. He has written a delightful natural history book, which should attract to more extended study. "Rocks and Their Origins," by Prof. Grenville A. J. Cole, and "The Origin of Earthquakes," by Dr. Charles Davison, demonstrate that exact statements in regard to geology can be made entertaining.

Four volumes are historical in character. Dr. C. H. W. Johns in "Ancient Assyria" has the opportunity to sum up briefly the outcome of some of the most brilliant archaeological discoveries of the present generation. It is a matter that can be treated adequately in fairly small space and his little book, illustrated with good pictures of the monuments, gives his readers a very complete idea of the subject. Recent research also affects Prof. R. A. S. Macalister's "A History of Civilization in Palestine," nearly half of which is occupied with matters that are prehistoric; the rest is taken up with a rapid survey of what has happened in Palestine from the time of the Jewish State to the present day. Though Mr. Robert S. Rait in "Life in the Mediæval University" takes into account the origin of universities and the great Continental schools, he has in mind chiefly the two English universities. He describes the discipline, the organization, the course of studies and something of the life, and has written an interesting book. "Methodism," by Dr. H. B. Workman, is also written from the British standpoint. Though it describes the spread of the sect across the seas, it dwells particularly on the condition and problems of Methodism in Great Britain.

The other three volumes are literary. In "The Troubadours" the Rev. H. J. Chaytor gives a very complete account of the character of Provençal poetry, of the men who sang and wrote it and the stories connected with them and of the influence the poetry had on other literatures. It is an admirable little monograph. "Goethe and the Twentieth Century," by Prof. J. G. Robertson, is in substance a literary biography written by a competent scholar. Only with "The Ballad in Literature," by T. F. Henderson, have we fault to find. In this the ballads are relegated to the background and an undue amount of space is devoted to the disputed question of their origin. The little book may serve as a summary of the polemics, which after all is of comparatively little importance. It is curious that the authorities the author quotes are almost all Americans.

The "Manuals" deserve to be widely known. They serve the purpose of university extension teaching and will prove very serviceable to the many persons who are not specialists, but yet have an interest in the subjects of which they treat.

Descriptive and Historical.

An entertaining book that will interest students of Dante and will be helpful, should any leisurely traveller care to spend his time in looking up traces of the great poet, has been written by Mary E. Lacy in "With Dante in Modern Florence" (E. P. Dutton and Company). The author is first of all a Dante scholar, and even if there is little left in his Florence that is connected with his personal life there is plenty that relates to his works. This the author has put together with great industry and care, she also describes conditions as they were in Dante's day, and has much to say about the efforts Florence has made to atone for the ill treatment of her most distinguished son. The book differs from many that have been written on the same plan in that the author is thoroughly conversant with her subject; she knows her Florence as well as her Dante. There are many illustrations.

It is not the Paris of yesterday, unfortunately, that Mr. Henry C. Shelley chats about in "Old Paris" (L. C. Page and Company, Boston), but the Paris of literature and history, that for the most part disappeared long ago. Here and there he mentions a place, like the Café Procope, to which the reader may still make a pilgrimage, but most of the taverns he tells of, those associated with Villon or Rabelais, for instance, even antiquarians hardly try to identify. An extremely interesting book on the remains of by gone Paris could easily be written, for the recent material in French is abundant. Mr. Shelley has not tried to write this; he has put together haphazard scraps from his reading about taverns and cafés, telling plenty of stories and legends, all of which the reader probably will find entertaining enough. The chapters on the salons, the theatres, the gardens and the clubs are much more perfunctory. Even a purposeless book about Paris, however, is readable and there is enjoyment to be derived from this miscellany. The illustrations seem to have been selected with as little care as the text.

The writer of school text books on history labors under curious restraints nowadays. He is limited in space, not so much by the exigencies of typography as by those of the time allotted in the school curriculum; he is bound to touch on the points selected by official boards; he must pay some attention to recent scientific research; he must often take care not to offend religious, social or political susceptibilities. In 500 pages of large print, with a very large deduction for pictures and maps, Prof. William L. Westermann has undertaken in "The Story of the Ancient Nations" (Appletons) to comply with the high school requirements for history from the beginnings of man to the establishment of Charlemagne's empire. He is obliged to squeeze in the recent discoveries in Egypt and Assyria with prehistoric theories, to touch on the art of Greece and on Christianity in the Roman fabric. He has accomplished his task intelligently and skilfully, but we feel some sympathy for youth which must swallow its history in tabloid form. The illustrations are well selected. The reason why we have selected this book for comment, however, relates to a purely mechanical matter. The publishers have had the enterprise to print some small colored maps as inserts in the text, an expedient long used in Europe which we hope will be imitated by other American publishers of school books.

The observations made in a recent trip to Canada, and particularly the province of Quebec, by Mr. Edgar Dupuys are printed in a small pamphlet entitled "Eastern Canada and the People Therein" (Literary Bureau, New York). The author writes agreeably, he has seen many interesting things and his comments on public men and the future of the French Canadians deserve consideration.

The "Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Chosen (Korea) 1910-1911" (Keijo, (Seoul,) by the Government General, in addition to the usual elaborate statistical accounts of public activities for the year, contains a good deal of recent history. This of course is presented in the light that Japanese officials would regard it; but their views must be taken into account in seeking for the truth. There is the text also of several important public documents. These Japanese official reports, with their maps, illustrations and tables, are a model for the Western nations.

Various Aspects of Socialism.

The advance of the season toward the period of unleashed politics has brought out a number of books on socialism. In some cases the authors have injected an element of timeliness into their products by discussing from the Socialist point of view the familiar figures and issues of the present campaign. Others are content with covering the old ground of socialistic theory in the fashion already well known to readers in politics. William English Walling in "Socialism As It Is" (Macmillans) has written a book of the former sort. It is a philosophic survey, as his sub-title indicates, of revolutionary activities throughout the world. He concentrates, however, upon the United States, England and Germany, with a less discursive attention to France and Australasia and a few pages on Italy and Belgium. His scheme of exposition does not call for a consecutive examination of conditions in each country; he comments upon them as they illustrate successive phases in the socialistic advance. Nor does he narrate at length the events which account for present conditions. "My idea has been not to describe," he says, "but to interpret." He has avoided a discussion of features peculiar to any one country, but he has shown how different circumstances have caused different manifestations of the same tendency. Thus he sees in the United States a phase of socialistic activity which has a counterpart not in Great Britain but in continental Europe. Mr. Walling holds that the American public has been grievously misinformed as to the spread of revolutionary socialism in this country. The movement here has been radical from the beginning and those who have argued for constructive reform have been outvoted in every convention of the present party and within the last two years have been regarded as a menace to its life. In this position the socialists are shown to be completely antagonistic to programmes of radical reform as proposed in the platforms of any of the major political parties. Socialists, believing class struggle to be inevitable, hold that reforms can be accomplished only by those who are to benefit by them and not by those who are to lose by them, as the capitalist class is bound to do. Mr. Walling has written a thoughtful book. His manner is judicial, though his attitude toward socialism is sympathetic. He has allowed no rant to enter into his pages.

A book of less fact and more speculation is "Socialism and the Great State" (Harpers). It is the joint production of H. G. Wells, Lady Warwick, L. G. Chiozza Money, M. P.; Sir Ray Lankester, C. J. Bond, E. S. P. Haynes, Cecil Chesterton, Cicely Hamilton, Roger Fry, G. R. Stirling Taylor, the Rev. Conrad Noel, Herbert Trench and Hugh P. Vowles. This rather impressive set of writers has united to compose a book in which a new social organization is described that is neither socialistic nor individualist—a Utopian system under which the laborer is worthy of his hire and a little more. The workers in the vineyard are conscripted for a term like soldiers under compulsory service. In case the labor is intermittent, such as farm work, then city workers change their tasks for it and restore their physical health thereby. Mr. Wells is the author of the first chapter. In it he lays out the scheme which the other writers follow in their own sections of the book. He makes it clear in his introductory paragraphs that the writers are not all socialists and that some of them would take exception to being identified with socialism. He purposely avoids calling the system which he and his collaborators describe by the name of "socialism" or "socialistic state." He calls it the "Great

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